

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----105952 161119Z /11

P 161027Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9540

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 23544

EXDIS

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR
SUBJ: CALL ON PRIME MINISTER

1. ACCOMPANIED BY DCM, I PAID MY FIRST FORMAL CALL ON PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK ON AUGUST 15. THE PM HAD SANDWICHED ME IN BETWEEN BEGINNING ROUND OF FAREWELL VISITS TO THE TROOPS IN THE FIELD.

2. AFTER A RATHER LAVISH EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES AND WELCOMING, I TOLD THE PM I CAME TO PAY MY RESPECTS AND THAT I WANTED TO ONLY RAISE A FEW SUBJECTS WITH HIM AT THIS TIME. I OPENED BY INDICATING THAT I COULD ATTEST PERSONALLY TO THE RESEPECT FOR HIM IN THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AS WELL AS THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. WE ALL APPLAUD HIS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINESE STATES AND CHINA AND WE CERTAINLY APPRECIATED HIS PERSONAL EFFORTS IN THE NARCOTICS FIELD AND ON BEHALF OF THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. HE SAID HE APPRECAITED MY REMARKS AND THAT THE THREE POINTS I HAD MENTIONED WERE KEY TO HIM. HE SAID HE HAD DEVOTED MUCH TIME TO THE THAI NARCOTICS PROGRAM, BUT HE STILL WAS DISSATISFIED WITH THAILAND'S ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS AND FELT THAT MORE COULD BE DONE. HE WAS DISMAYED AT THE GROWTH OF THAILAND'S ADDICT POPULATION.

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3. TRIP TO U.S. - THE PM SAID THAT HE WAS EAGER TO TAKE UP THE INVITATION TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES. HE WANTED TO VISIT AT A TIME SUFFICIENTLY BEFORE THE ELECTION, WHICH HE SAID WOULD TAKE PLACE SOMETIME IN MARCH. HE ALSO WANTED IT TO BE A VERY QUICK VISIT, SINCE HE FELT HE COULD NOT DALLY ABROAD TOO LONG FOR FEAR OF CRITICISM.

MOREOVER, HE HAD OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT POLITICAL PROBLEMS AT HOME.

4. I ASKED HIM WHAT WOULD BE THE BEST TIME FOR HIM. HE SAID HE COULD NOT GO BEFORE DECEMBER AND THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO COME AT LEAST A MONTH BEFORE THE ELECTION TO PERMIT HIMSELF SUFFICIENT TIME TO MANAGE HIS POLITICAL FORTUNES IN THAILAND. THE BEST TIME FOR HIM WOULD BE EARLY JANUARY BUT HE COULD DO IT ANY TIME BETWEEN LATE DECEMBER AND THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF FEBRUARY. THE MORE TIME BETWEEN THE VISIT AND THE ELECTION, THE EASIER IT WOULD BE FOR HIM. HE SAID THE JAPANESE HAD INVITED HIM IN JANUARY; FUKUDA WANTED TO DO SOMETHING "BIG" FOR HIM. I SAID HIS VISIT WAS IMPORTANT TO US, THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS PREFERENCES BACK TO WASHINGTON, THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT WOULD BE SUITABLE GIVEN THE PRESIDENT'S BUSY SCHEDULE, AND THAT I WOULD BE BACK TO HIM WHEN I HAD AN INDICATION OF WHAT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE.

5. ASEAN - FROM THE REPORTS HE HAD RECEIVED FROM UPPADIT THE PM THOUGHT THE WASHINGTON MEETING WENT VERY WELL. HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE ATTENTION THE U.S. HAD PUT ON ASEAN AND THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS A POLITICALLY IMPORTANT FACT FOR ASIA. HE FELT THAT TANGIBLE ACHIEVEMENTS WERE MODEST. I SAID I THOUGHT THE MEETING HAD BOTH AN IMPORTANT SYMBOLIC IMPACT AND VERY USEFUL SPECIFIC RESULTS. IN THE
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CASE OF THE FORMER, IT WAS, AS HE SAID, NOT ONLY A CLEAR INDICATION OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR ASEAN, BUT IT WAS ALSO POLITICALLY IMPORTANT IN THE UNITED STATES IN TERMS OF GENERATING GREATER PUBLIC INTEREST IN ASIA AND HELPING ESTABLISH BETTER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AN APPROPRIATE AND CONSTRUCTIVE U.S. ROLE IN THE AREA. I SAID THE TANGIBLE RESULTS WERE ALSO SIGNIFICANT. I POINTED TO THE COMMITMENT TO PURSUE THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A COMMON FUND AND IN THE CASE OF THAILAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VISITS OF EXIM BANK CHAIRMAN MOORE AND THE OPIC SPONSORED GROUP HEADED BY CHARLES ROBINSON. I EXPLAINED TO HIM THAT ROBINSON WAS A FORMER DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE AND THAT THE VISITS COULD POTENTIALLY HAVE A MAJOR CATALYTIC EFFECT ON U.S. INVESTMENT IN THAILAND. THIS SPARKED THE PM'S INTEREST. HE SAID FOREIGN INVESTMENT WAS CRUCIAL TO HIS EFFORTS AND HE WANTED TO KNOW WHEN THE GROUP WOULD COME. I SAID SOMETIME IN NOVEMBER. HE HOPED IT WOULD NOT BE DURING TENG HSIAO-P'ING'S VISIT, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN SCHEDULED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 4-9, (HE CAUTIONED THAT THE DATES HAD NOT YET BEEN MADE PUBLIC).

6. U.S.-THAI RELATIONS - THE PM THEN WENT INTO A LONG

SOLILOQUY ON THAILAND'S SOLITARY POSITION AND THE LACK OF SUPPORT THAT HE WAS GETTING FROM THE U.S., COMPARING IT TO THE COMPLETE SUPPORT VIETNAM WAS GETTING FROM THE SOVIET UNION. HE WAS PARTICULARLY BITTER ABOUT OUR MILITARY SUPPLY POLICIES, SAYING THAT THE CEILING WAS CUTTING OUT SMALL COUNTRIES LIKE HIS SO THAT MIDEAST COUNTRIES COULD BE TAKEN CARE OF, AND THAT WE WERE INSUFFICIENTLY INSENSITIVE TO THAILAND'S DEFENSE NEEDS. HE HAD TO GO TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES FOR EQUIPMENT. HE

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----105971 161119Z /23
P 161027Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9541

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EXDIS

CLAIMED THAT WE WERE NOT WILLING TO SELL HIM IN A TIMELY FASHION EVEN BASIC ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT, SUCH AS THE M-79. THE LEVEL OF CREDITS WE WERE OFFERING WERE MINIMAL, AND HE DIDN'T SEE WHY THE U.S., WHICH HAD BEEN SO CLOSELY INVOLVED WITH THAILAND, WOULD NOT PROVIDE THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT AND THUS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WHEREWITHAL THE PEOPLE AND THE MILITARY NEEDED. HE DID NOT THINK THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY HAD DETERIORATED, BUT ADEQUATE EQUIPMENT WAS NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENCE, WHICH IS ESSENTIAL FOR POLITICAL STABILITY.

7. I CHOSE NOT TO ARGUE WITH HIM ON THIS OCCASION BUT MERELY STATED THE U.S. WAS STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF THAILAND, THAT WE HAVE SIGNIFICANT PROGRAMS HERE, THAT WE HAD, FOR EXAMPLE, RAISED THE SIZE OF OUR AID EFFORTS* AND THAT WHILE WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO MEET ALL OF THAILAND'S EQUIPMENT REQUESTS, NO ONE CAN DOUBT THAT WE ARE STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE OF THAI EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND DEVELOP THEIR COUNTRY. I SAID I WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE M-79 PROBLEM BUT WOULD LOOK INTO IT. THE PM NODDED AND SAID THAT THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WERE CRUCIAL FOR HIS COUNTRY, THAT CONTINUED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WAS ESSENTIAL AND THAT

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFIDENCE WAS THE KEY, AND THAT HE HOPED
THAT THE U.S. WOULD NOT LET THAILAND GO DOWN FOR SMALL
AMOUNTS OF MONEY OR ARMS.

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8. I TOLD THE PM THERE WERE A NUMBER OF OTHER SUBJECTS
I WANT TO RAISE WITH HIM PRIVATELY, BUT DID NOT WANT TO DO
SO BECAUSE I KNEW HOW BUSY HIS SCHEDULE WAS TODAY. HE
SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THEM EARLY ON AT HIS HOUSE OVER
DINNER.

9. COMMENTS FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL. ABRAMOWITZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO23544
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780335-0110
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780856/aaaabuib.tel
Line Count: 187
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7bbafc61-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1715416
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CALL ON PRIME MINISTER
TAGS: PEPR, PDIP, TH, US, (KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN), (ABRAMOWITZ, MORTON I)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7bbafc61-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014